

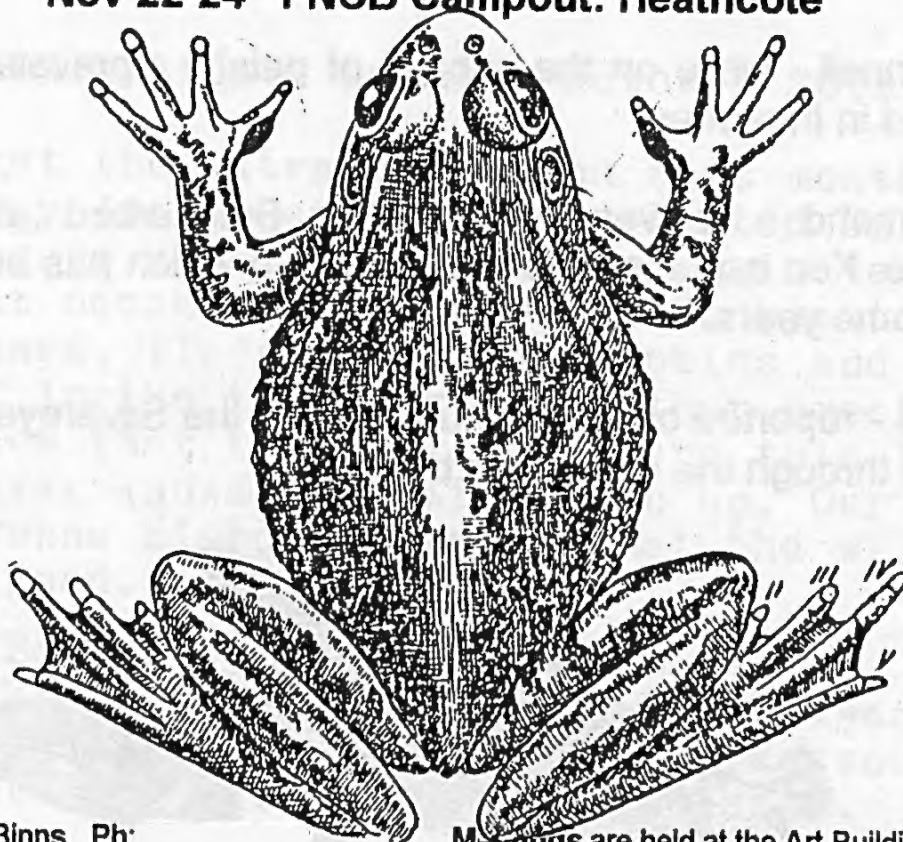
Field Naturalists' Club of Ballarat *Incorporated*



OCTOBER 1996

EXCURSION - NEWS SHEET

- Meeting : Oct 4 Dr G Ambrose: Frogwatch
Meeting : Nov 1 Stella Bedggood Memorial
Mr B Adcock: Planet Jupiter
Excursion : Oct 5 Wetland Frogs (Sat evening)
Dr G Ambrose
Excursion : Oct 20 Dalyenong: Maryborough FNC
Excursion : Nov 3 Lake Corangamite: Mr R Missen
Excursion : Nov 22-24 FNCB Campout: Heathcote



President: Mr G Binns Ph:
Secretary: Mr L Fink
Treasurer: Ms S Davison
Editor: Mr A Dyson

Postal Address:
PO Box 328W, Ballarat West, 3350.

Meetings are held at the Art Building,
School of Mines and Industries, Lydiard
St South, commencing at 7.30 pm.
Excursions commence from the corner
of Sturt and Armstrong Sts., Ballarat, at
9.30 am for full-day excursions or at 1.30
pm for half-day excursions.

FIELD REPORTS

Pat and Bill Murphy - wallabies returning to the old burnt out areas at Enfield. In the same area the Golden Bush Pea was flowering and Spotted Quail Thrush were seen - possibly nesting.

Avis Barlow - a pair of Crimson Rosellas nesting in nesting boxes in her garden at Mount Helen. Red-browed Firetails have returned to her garden.

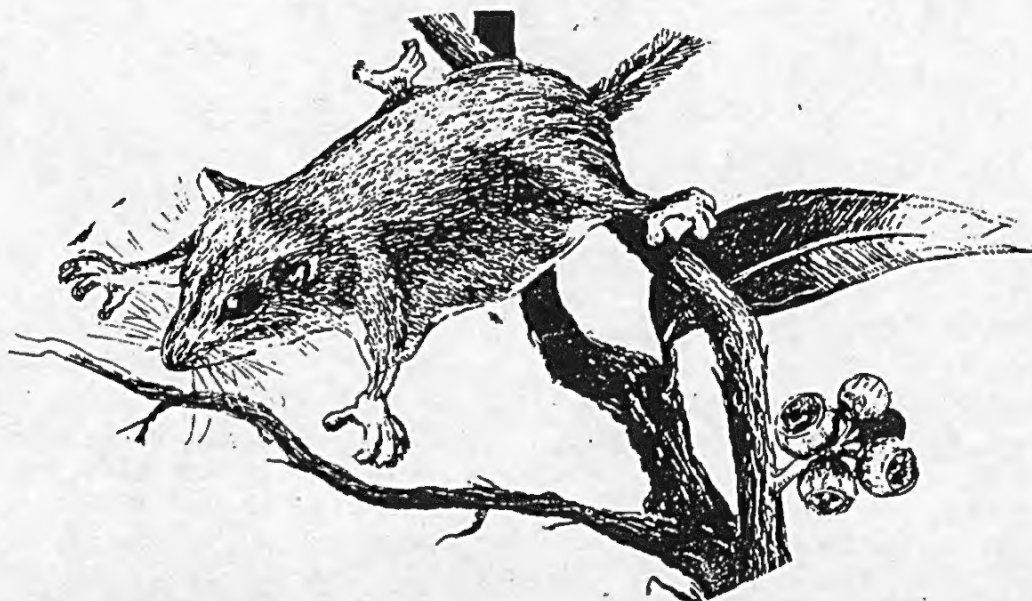
Frank Harrap - an unusual sight in his garden at Mount Helen - Pied Currawong making use of the bird feeders. Frank has also seen galahs at home for the first time.

Helen Burgess - also reported on the number of galahs in her garden. She has also seen kookaburras in the garden - they have not been present for some years. Helen reported on a Black-shouldered Kite over the city area.

Ken McDonnell - while on the subject of galahs - prevalent in North Ballarat and in Invermay.

Ken Hammond - a very vocal Grey Butcherbird at home in Wendouree. Ken assumes it is the same bird which has been nesting there for some years.

Greg Binns - reported on the "annual visit" of the Silvereyes - clearing the insects through the deciduous trees.

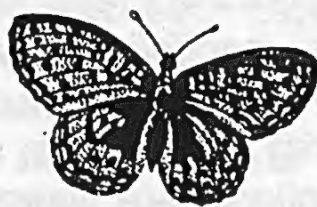
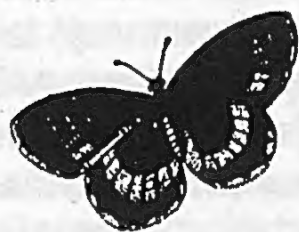


DIARY DATES

18 - 20 October - WVFNA Campout at Casterton (Myaring Reserve).
RSVP by 10 October. Details are available

24 October (Thursday) 7.30pm Committee Meeting at [REDACTED]
(Greg Binns)

1 November - Stella Bedggood Memorial Lecture night. A market stall will be conducted and members are asked to bring suitable items for sale. Also please bring two plates for supper.



DALYENONG EXCURSION: Sunday, October 20th

Don't forget the extra excursion this month!
It is many years since the club visited Dalyenong, a bush reserve with access through private land. On the last occasion we saw Black Honeyeaters and Black-chinned, fledgling Hooded Robins and a variety of lorikeets among many other species. No guarantee that they will be there this time but one never knows what will turn up. Our guides, Ron and Yvonne Bishop, predict that the wildflowers should be good.

Departing Book City corner 9.30 am
Distance: Stuart Mill, about 110 km, Dalyenong a few km east. Anyone wishing to rendezvous at Avoca or Stuart Mill, please let me know.

M. Rotheram

Grenville Excursion - September 8

The plants of the Ballarat region show great diversity and this was very evident on our September 1996 excursion. While the peak of spring flowering was another month away, we nevertheless found a wealth of wild flowers to interest us throughout the day.

Our hospitable hosts were Jenny and Peter Sedgwick of Grenville. They showed us several areas of natural bushland on the eastern section of the Enfield forest where peppermints and stringybarks were the dominant trees and where the middle storey vegetation consisted chiefly of acacia species along with teatrees, bush peas and heath species. However the ground cover layer was impressive and we were shown many plants in flower. These included a wonderful variety of greenhoods, namely nodding greenhoods (*Pterostylis nutans*), tall greenhoods (*Pterostylis longifolia*), dwarf greenhoods (*Pterostylis nana*), maroonhoods (*Pterostylis pedunculata*), blunt greenhoods (*Pterostylis curta*), and trim greenhoods, (*Pterostylis concinna*). Other orchids to gain our attention were slatey helmet orchids (*Acianthus incurvus*) and mayfly orchids (*Acianthus caudatus*). Also seen were leaves of bird orchids, hare orchids, small mosquito orchids and various sun orchids. The beautiful mauve flowers of Common Hovea (*Hovea linearis*) and Purple Coral Pea (*Hardenbergia violacea*) made a bright display throughout the forest, while Running Postman (*Kennedia prostrata*) and Love Creeper (*Comesperma volubile*) were beginning to show their pretty flowers.

Much comment followed the discovery of honey globules below the honeypot flowers (*Acrotiche serrulata*). It was said that these tiny honey globules are sometimes used for jam, a product that can be found in shops in some parts of southern Australia.

Cold temperature and showers restricted bird movement so the list of sightings was limited. However the presence of Scarlet Robin, Sitella and the first Olive-backed Orioles of the season were bright spots.

We are grateful to Jenny and Peter for a most enjoyable day full of interest which culminated in a homeward drive through the Enfield forest to Little Hard Hills and hence to Ballarat.

PYRITES RANGE EXCURSION - September 22

Gale force winds did not deter the small contingent of members who explored a section of the Pyrites Range which lies between the Bullangarook Range and the Djerridwah Creek (NE of Bacchus Marsh), an area not previously visited by the club. This is the south eastern section of the Wombat Forest.

The area contains a variety of eucalypt species, in the gullies. or the ridges, and on the surrounding flats - Yellow Gum, Yellow Box, Grey Box, Red Ironbark, Red Stringybark, Narrow-leafed Box. It is also the most westerly range of the stunted form of Silvertop (*Eucalyptus sieberi*), a common eucalypt of tall open forests of eastern Victoria. The heathy ridges provided a number of flowering plants including - *Baeckea ramossissima* (Rosy aeckea), *Leptospermum scoparium* (Manuka tea-tree), *Hakea decurrens* (Silky Hakea), *Grevillea alpina* (Downy Grevillea), *Acacia acinacea* (Gold dust Wattle), *Acacia oxycedrus* (Spike Wattle), *Acacia gunnii* (Plougshare Wattle), *Pultenaea mollis* (Soft Bush Pea), *Daviesia leptophylla* (Narrow-leaf Bitter Pea), *Platylobium formosum* (Handsome Flat Pea).

In spite of the wind, Painted Lady and Australian Admiral butterflies were active on the ridges.

On the return journey a call was made to the Long Forest Reserve to inspect fine patches of Blunt Greenhoods (*Pterostylis curta*).

Our thanks to Bill and Pat Murphy for the reconnaissance of the area and the preparation of a most enjoyable excursion. This is obviously a region supporting an interesting range of flora and fauna and we look forward to further exploration under more favourable conditions.

G B



NATIVE ANIMAL RESCUE - Mrs Shirley Mitchell

Shirley spoke at our meeting on the 6th of September. Shirley and her husband Kevin and family run a local Wildlife Shelter.

The Mitchell family shelter is in a domestic backyard in Sebastopol. It started when a daughter of the family (who worked with the RSPCA) brought home native animals to care for during RSPCA 'off duty' hours. Technically this was illegal and the Mitchells attempted to get some help, approval and encouragement from the relevant State Government bodies - with little success. Eventually credentials were established and a licence given. There was very little information or support (including financial support - the Mitchells do not qualify for any government funding) in the early days. Over the years great strides have been taken. Kevin and Shirley set up the Western Victorian Wildlife Group, members of which meet every three months. Other Wildlife Shelters locally are in areas such as Anakie, Ararat, Clunes and Glenlyon. Police and Fire Brigades usually have details of the shelters, as well as the Department of Natural Resources and Environment.

In the early days of the shelter the Mitchells worked much by trial and error. Little was known about the correct diet for marsupials. Experience has shown that different formulas suit different animals - even twin young kangaroos were fed on two types of formula after early problems. Most young need feeding every two hours and need a "natural" environment - the Mitchells are used to carrying young possums in woolen "pouches" slung around their bodies. Young animals that would normally be reared in a pouch are kept in pouchlike conditions where they also receive body heat and keep contact with heart beat and movement of the carrier.



The Mitchells have a licence to use a blowdart and have been able to treat many adult animals which could not have been approached unless tranquillised.

Shirley reminded us of our responsibilities. If we see an animal hit on the roadside, stop. Check any pouch and if young is attached to a teat push the pouch "inside out" and remove the young. Keep it warm and contact the shelter or nearby Police or Fire Brigade. If a kangaroo has a broken back or back legs it cannot survive and needs to be put down as soon as possible. A broken front leg can be repaired. The back leg of a koala can be repaired but not the front leg. It is wise to carry an old coat or blanket in the car. Shirley warns that koalas can be very dangerous and must be approached from behind and once covered must be tied securely. A bucket is a useful item to contain an echidna - leather gloves help as well.

The Mitchell family are always happy to receive any old and soft blankets, sheets, wooly jumpers and cloths for bandages.

Our thanks to Shirley for a most interesting and informative talk on working with sick and injured animals.

VD



NATURE'S CHEMISTS

BUTTERFLIES may be nature's greatest chemists. Researchers have studied ten species of African milkweed butterflies and analysed the chemicals produced by male scent glands, using the techniques of gas chromatography and mass spectrometry. They identified 214 compounds from 14 chemical classes.

The butterflies have become such spectacular chemists to make pheromones for recognising each other during sexual communications, say the researchers. Individual milkweed butterfly species had anywhere from 12 to 59 chemicals. Each species had a quite distinct mixture, and each had some compounds unique to its species.

Milkweed butterflies also store plant-derived dihydropyrrolizines to protect themselves against predators, and males pass on some of these alkaloids to the females during copulation to make her eggs taste nasty.

One of the components of the male pheromone bouquet is derived from the alkaloids. This can tell a female how much of the protective chemical she will receive from the male, and help to reassure her that he belongs to the right species. Other components may stimulate her egg production. - Clare Putnam in *New Scientist*, England

Large Forest Eptesicus.

Eptesicus sagittula.

Order Chiroptera Suborder Microchiroptera
Family vespertilionidae.

The Large Forest Eptesicus, which despite it's common name, is merely one of the least small of a genus of tiny bats, it roosts as single individuals or up to 60 in hollow limbs or large cracks in Eucalypt trees. It lives in rather dense wet and dry sclerophyl forests, which has a similar overall distribution of the marginally smaller Little Forest Eptesicus, which has a similar overall distribution, but prefers more open forest and woodland, permitting the resource to be partitioned between these two closely related species.

Recent research in the Brindabella range N.S.W. where at least 8 species of bats reside, show the forest eptesicus forages on mild nights in June and July when other bats are in hibernation

The significance of this finding is not clear but it seems that it is able to come out of winter torpor to forage and thus use a meagre food resource without competition from other bats.

Little is known of it's reproduction but a colony of 18 discovered near Tumut in early Dec. consisted of heavily pregnant females and others suckling newly born young.

Their status is common in limited habitat. they should be found in the Ballarat area. There are no subspecies, however, there is an isolated population in the Atherton Tablelands.

Elfin